

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 2

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1/S03

a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first serpentine expansion column, a second end extending from the proximal end region of the second serpentine expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the first connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut, the first and second serpentine expansion columns connected only by first connecting struts.

a second connecting strut column comprising a plurality of second connecting struts, each second connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the second serpentine expansion column, a second end extending from the proximal end region of the third serpentine expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the second connecting strut, the first end of the second connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the second connecting strut, the second and third serpentine expansion columns connected only by second connecting struts.

Claim 35. (previously amended) The stent of claim 34 wherein the first expansion struts and the first connecting struts are provided in a ratio, the ratio of the first expansion struts to the first connecting struts is 2:1.

Claim 36. (previously amended) The stent of claim 34 wherein the first expansion column comprises a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region, the second expansion column comprises a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region, and each first connecting strut has a first end which extends from a side of one joining strut in the distal end region of the first expansion column and a second end which extends from a side of one joining strut in the proximal end region of the second expansion column.

Claim 37. (currently amended) A stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent comprising: a plurality of expansion strut columns each of which defines a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent, each expansion strut column defining a proximal end region and a distal end region, and consisting of a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming a first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each first expansion strut connected only at a proximal end to one first

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 3

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1/503

expansion strut adjacent thereto and only at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto;

~~a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, each second expansion strut connected only at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto and only at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto;~~

and a plurality of connecting strut columns, each connecting strut column extending between two adjacent expansion strut columns, each connecting strut column a first connecting strut column comprising consisting of a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first one expansion column, a second end extending from the proximal end region of the second an adjacent expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut, only first connecting struts extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column and only first connecting struts extending from the proximal end region of the second expansion column.

Claim 38. (currently amended) ~~The stent of claim 37 wherein the first expansion column comprises a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region, the second expansion column comprises a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region;~~

~~and each first connecting strut has a first end which extends from a side of one joining strut in the distal end region of the first expansion column and a second end which extends from a side of one joining strut in the proximal end region of the second expansion column~~

A stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent comprising:

a first expansion strut column defining a proximal end region and a distal end region, the first expansion strut column consisting of a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts and a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region, each first expansion strut connected only at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto and only at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto, the first expansion strut column defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 4

Amenament  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429- JS03

a second expansion strut column defining a proximal end region and a distal end region, the second expansion strut column consisting of a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts and a plurality of joining struts in the distal end region and a plurality of joining struts in the proximal end region, each second expansion strut connected only at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto and only at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto, the second expansion strut column defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

a first connecting strut column consisting of a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the a side of one joining strut in the distal end region of the first expansion column, a second end extending from a side of one joining strut in the proximal end region of the second expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut, only first connecting struts extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column and only first connecting struts extending from the proximal end region of the second expansion column.

Claim 39. (currently amended) A stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent comprising:  
a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming a first serpentine expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region,  
a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming a second serpentine expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region,  
a plurality of interconnected third expansion struts, the third expansion struts forming a third serpentine expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region,  
the first, second and third serpentine expansion columns each defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column and a second end extending from the proximal end region of the second expansion column and at least one curved portion,

a second connecting strut column comprising a plurality of second connecting struts, each

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 5

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1S03

second connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the second expansion column and a second end extending from the proximal end region of the third expansion column and at least one curved portion;

the first serpentine expansion column, the second serpentine expansion column and the first connecting strut column forming a plurality of first geometric cells about the circumference of the stent,

each first geometric cell having a proximal region extending between two adjacent first expansion struts, a distal region extending between two adjacent second expansion struts and a middle region extending between two adjacent first connecting struts, the proximal region and the distal region circumferentially offset from one another, the stent having only first geometric cells.

Claim 40. (previously added) The stent of claim 39 wherein each first connecting strut includes at least two curved portions.

Claim 41. (previously amended) The stent of claim 40 wherein the first expansion strut and the first connecting struts are provided in a ratio, the ratio of the first expansion struts to the first connecting struts is 2:1.

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Cant  
Claim 42. (currently amended) A stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent ~~comprising~~ consisting of a plurality of expansion columns each of which forms a closed pathway about the circumference of the stent, adjacent expansion columns connected to one another via connecting members, the stent expansion columns and connecting members forming a plurality of cells, each of the plurality of cells having substantially the same asymmetrical shape, each of the plurality of cells having a first end portion which extends substantially in a longitudinal direction and a second end portion which extends substantially in a longitudinal direction, the second end portion longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the first end portion, the first end portion connected to the second end portion via a plurality of connecting members each of which has a plurality of curved sections.

Claim 43. (previously added) The stent of claim 42 where each connecting member has a first end and a second end which is circumferentially and longitudinally offset from the first end.

Claim 44. (currently amended) An unexpanded stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent comprising:

a plurality of expansion struts arranged in expansion columns, the expansion struts within

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 6

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 US03

an expansion column being interconnected, each expansion column defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

the expansion struts including a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, and a plurality of interconnected third expansion struts

the first expansion struts forming a first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming a first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region; each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to only one expansion strut, namely a first expansion strut to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto by a first proximal joining strut; and at a distal end to another first only one expansion strut, namely a first expansion strut adjacent thereto by a first distal joining strut, the first expansion column having a plurality of first proximal corners where each first proximal joining strut and each first expansion strut are connected and a plurality of first distal corners where each first distal joining strut and each first expansion strut are connected;

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a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming a second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to only one expansion strut, namely a second expansion strut to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto by a second proximal joining strut and at a distal end to only one another second expansion strut, namely a second expansion strut adjacent thereto by a second distal joining strut, the second expansion column having a plurality of second proximal corners where each second proximal joining strut and each second expansion strut are connected and a plurality of second distal corners where each second distal joining strut and each second expansion strut are connected;

the third expansion struts forming a third expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each third expansion strut connected at a proximal end to only one expansion strut, namely a third expansion strut by a third proximal joining strut and at a distal end to only one expansion strut, namely a third expansion strut by a third distal joining strut, the third expansion column having a plurality of third proximal corners where each third proximal joining strut and each third expansion strut are connected and a plurality of third distal corners

Application No. 09/952,562

Page 7

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429/US03where each third distal joining strut and each third expansion strut are connected:

a first connecting strut column ~~comprising~~ consisting of a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a single first end extending from one of the plurality of first distal corners of the distal end region of the first expansion column, a single second end extending from one of the plurality of second proximal corners of the proximal end region of the second expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut connecting to the first expansion column at a location which is longitudinally and circumferentially offset from a location at which the second end of the connecting strut connects to the second expansion column and

a second connecting strut column consisting of a plurality of second connecting struts, each second connecting strut having a single first end extending from one of the plurality of second distal corners of the distal end region of the second expansion column, a single second end extending from one of the plurality of third proximal corners of the proximal end region of the third expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the second connecting strut connecting to the second expansion column at a location which is longitudinally and circumferentially offset from a location at which the second end of the connecting strut connects to the third expansion column.

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Claim 45. (previously added) The stent of claim 44 wherein the first expansion column comprises a plurality of loops in the distal end region and a plurality of loops in the proximal end region, the second expansion column comprises a plurality of loops in the distal end region and a plurality of loops in the proximal end region, and each first connecting strut has a first end which extends from a side of one loop in the distal end region of the first expansion column and a second end which extends from a side of one loop in the proximal end region of the second expansion column.

Claim 46. (currently amended) A cellular stent constructed from a metal tube, all of the cells of the stent being of uniform geometry, the stent consisting of a plurality of interconnected expansion struts and connecting struts including ~~comprising~~:

a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming a first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto by a first proximal

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 8

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 S03

joining strut and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto by a first distal joining strut, the first expansion column having a plurality of first proximal intersections where each first proximal joining strut and each first expansion strut are connected and a plurality of first distal intersections where each first distal joining strut and each first expansion strut are connected;

a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming a second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto by a second proximal joining strut and at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto by a second distal joining strut, the second expansion column having a plurality of second proximal intersections where each second proximal joining strut and each second expansion strut are connected and a plurality of second distal intersections where each second distal joining strut and each second expansion strut are connected;

the first and second expansion columns each defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

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Cen  
a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from a location immediately adjacent to one of the plurality of first distal intersections of the distal end region of the first expansion column, a second end extending from a location immediately adjacent to one of the plurality of second proximal intersections of the proximal end region of the second expansion column and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut.

Claim 47. (currently amended) An unexpanded stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming a first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 9

Amenment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-US03

a second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto;

the first and second expansion columns each defining a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent;

a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one first expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of first expansion struts, a second end extending from the proximal end region of the second expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one second expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of second expansion struts and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut, the first end of the first connecting strut longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut.

48. An unexpanded stent constructed from a metal tube, the stent having a first end, a second end and longitudinal axis, the stent comprising:

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a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the interconnected first expansion struts forming a closed, continuous first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto;

Cont  
a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming a closed, continuous second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts,

each first connecting strut having a first end extending from a first location at the distal end region of the first expansion column, ~~the first end extending in a direction non-parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stent,~~

a second end extending from a second location at the proximal end region of the second expansion column, the second location circumferentially and longitudinally offset from the first location, ~~the second end extending in a direction non-parallel to the~~



Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 10

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1'S03

longitudinal axis of the stent,  
and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the  
connecting strut,

wherein the first end of the stent consists of the first expansion column.

Claim 49. (currently amended) An unexpanded stent constructed from a metal tube, the  
stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts forming :  
closed, continuous first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region,  
each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent  
thereto and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming  
a closed, continuous second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end  
region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one second expansion strut  
adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a first connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts, each first  
connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion  
column at a location in closer proximity to one first expansion strut than to any other of the  
plurality of first expansion struts,

each first connecting strut including a first end which is connected to the first expansion  
strut column and which extends in a longitudinal direction toward the second expansion column  
and in a circumferential direction away from the two first expansion struts which are distally  
interconnected and nearest to the first end, the connecting strut including a portion which extends  
in a longitudinal direction toward the second expansion column and in a circumferential direction  
toward the two first expansion struts nearest to the first end of the connecting strut.

Claim 50. (currently amended) An unexpanded stent constructed from a metal tube, the  
stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, the first expansion struts  
forming a closed, continuous first expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal  
end region, each first expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut  
adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto;

Application No. 09/952,562  
Page 11

Amendment  
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 S03

a plurality of interconnected second expansion struts, the second expansion struts forming a closed, continuous second expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each second expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one second expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another second expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a plurality of interconnected third expansion struts, the third expansion struts forming a closed, continuous third expansion column having a proximal end region and a distal end region, each third expansion strut connected at a proximal end to one third expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another third expansion strut adjacent thereto;

a first connecting strut column ~~comprising~~ consisting of a plurality of first connecting struts, each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one first expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of first expansion struts,

~~each first connecting strut including a first end portion which is connected at a first location to the first expansion strut column and which extends away from the two first expansion struts which are nearest thereto, the entirety of the first end portion offset circumferentially from the first expansion struts which are adjacent to the one expansion strut;~~

~~the first connecting strut including and~~ a second end portion which is connected to the second expansion strut column at a second location, the first and second locations longitudinally and circumferentially offset from one another;

a second connecting strut column consisting of a plurality of second connecting struts, each second connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the second expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one second expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of second expansion struts, and a second end which is connected to the third expansion strut column at a location which is longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the location of the first end of the connecting strut,

wherein the first and second expansion strut columns are connected to one another only via the first connecting strut column and the second and third expansion strut columns are connected to one another only via the second connecting strut column.

*Application No. 09/952,562*  
*Page 12*

*Amendment*  
*Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 US03*

### 35 USC 112

Claim 48 is rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph. The language of 'non-parallel' is said to be outside the scope of the invention. The Final Office Action further notes that:

Claim 48 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, because the specification, while being enabling for connecting struts with "non-parallel" orientations of the figures, does not reasonably provide enablement for a zig-zag, curled, or helical orientation for the connecting struts. The specification does not enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make the invention commensurate in scope with these claims.

Claim 48 is also rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph. The language of 'non-parallel' is considered to be indefinite.

Applicant considers the language to be supported by the specification. Nevertheless, in order to forward the prosecution of the instant application, the language has been deleted from the claim.

### 35 USC 102

Claims 34, 36, 39, 40, and 42-50 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Pinchasik et al (US 5449373).

Claim 34 and claim 36 dependent therefrom include the recitation that the first and second serpentine expansion columns are connected only by first connecting struts and that the second and third serpentine expansion columns are connected only by second connecting struts. In Fig. 2C of Pinchasik, on the other hand, as highlighted in the Final Office Action, the red colored 'bands' are connected to one another via 'connecting struts' as well as via additional 'expansion' struts. Withdrawal of the Pinchasik rejection as to these claims is requested.

Claim 39 and 40 dependent therefrom recite that the stent has only first geometric cells, where each first geometric cell has a proximal region extending between two adjacent first expansion struts, a distal region extending between two adjacent second expansion struts and a middle region extending between two adjacent first connecting struts and the proximal region and the distal region are circumferentially offset from one another. The Pinchasik stent of Fig.

*Application No. 09/952,562*  
*Page 13*

*Amendment*  
*Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429- JS03*

2C, as shown in the Final Office has two different types of cells. Of the two cells, the diamond-shaped cells do not meet the above discussed claim language concerning the offset between the proximal and distal regions. Thus, the Pinchasik stent is not limited to the recited geometric cell and, therefore, does not anticipate the instant claims.

Claim 42 recites a stent which consists of a plurality of cells, each of which has substantially the same asymmetrical shape. As discussed above, the Pinchasik stent has two different types of cells with different shapes. For this reason, the Pinchasik reference does not anticipate claim 42 or claim 43 dependent therefrom. Moreover, one of the types of cells is diamond shaped and is not asymmetric. For this additional reason, the Pinchasik reference does not anticipate claim 42 or claim 43 dependent therefrom.

Claims 44 and 45 recites an unexpanded stent comprising first, second and third expansion columns which are connected by first and second connector columns. The recited connectivity of the claimed stent in conjunction with the recited structure of the expansion columns is not present in the Pinchasik stent.

Claim 46 is directed to a cellular stent where all of the cells of the stent are of uniform geometry. This feature is not disclosed in Pinchasik. Pinchasik shows stents which have a plurality of different geometry cells not cells of uniform geometry.

Claim 47 is directed to a stent and includes the presence of first and second expansion columns and a connecting strut column comprising a plurality of first connecting struts. Each first connecting strut has a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one first expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of first expansion struts, a second end extending from the proximal end region of the second expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one second expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of second expansion struts and at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut where the first end of the first connecting strut is longitudinally and circumferentially offset from the second end of the first connecting strut.

Pinchasik does not anticipate the instant claim because at least the limitation concerning the ends of the connecting struts extending from locations which are in closer to one first expansion strut than to any other is not met. Applicant does not consider the limitation to be

*Application No. 09/952,562*  
*Page 14*

*Amendment*  
*Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 'S03*

met based on the figures of Pinchasik and further notes that the Pinchasik patent does not even show the entirety of the Pinchasik stent. As such, there is no way of knowing how the struts in the background of the stent connect.

Claim 48 is directed to an unexpanded stent which comprises a first and a second expansion column. The first expansion column is formed of a plurality of interconnected first expansion struts, where each first expansion strut is connected at a proximal end to one first expansion strut adjacent thereto and at a distal end to another first expansion strut adjacent thereto. A first connecting strut column connects the first and second expansion columns. Each connecting strut of the first connecting strut column is connected at a first location on the first expansion column which is circumferentially and longitudinally offset from a second location on the second expansion column to which the connecting strut is connected. Each first connecting strut has at least one curved region between the first end and the second end of the connecting strut. Finally, the first end of the stent consists of the first expansion column.

This combination of features is not disclosed in Pinchasik as applied. To the extent that Pinchasik can be construed as having a first expansion strut column, as highlighted in the Office Action, the first end of the stent does not consist of such an expansion column -- additional structure is present.

Claim 49 is directed to an unexpanded stent and includes the presence of first and second expansion columns which are connected by a first connecting strut column having first connecting struts. Each first connecting strut includes a first end which is connected to the first expansion strut column and which extends in a longitudinal direction toward the second expansion column and in a circumferential direction away from the two first expansion struts nearest to the first end which are distally interconnected. Each first connecting strut also includes a portion which extends in a longitudinal direction toward the second expansion column and in a circumferential direction toward the two first expansion struts nearest to the first end of the connecting strut. This structure of connector is not present in Pinchasik as applied in the Office Action.

Claim 50 is directed to an unexpanded stent. The claim recites the presence of first, second expansion and third columns which are connected to one another only via first and second connecting strut columns. The structure of the expansion columns and of the connecting

*Application No. 09/952,562*  
*Page 15*

*Amendment*  
*Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1 JS03*

strut columns is recited in the claim. The first connecting strut column consists of a plurality of first connecting struts, with each first connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the first expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one first expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of first expansion struts. The second connecting strut column consists of a plurality of second connecting struts, with each second connecting strut having a first end extending from the distal end region of the second expansion column at a location in closer proximity to one second expansion strut than to any other of the plurality of second expansion struts.

Claim 50 is patentable over Pinchasik, as applied in the Office Action, in that the so-called expansion columns of Pinchasik, as identified in the Office Action, are not connected only by first expansion columns, as drawn in the Office Action. Rather, there is additional structure connecting the so-called expansion columns.

#### 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 35 and 41 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pinchasik et al alone.

Claim 35 depends from claim 34 and is patentable over Pinchasik at least for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 34.

Claim 41 depends indirectly from claim 39 and is patentable over Pinchasik et al at least for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 39.

#### 35 USC 102(e)/35 USC 103

Claims 34, 37-40, and 42-50 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Brown et al (US 6348065), or alternatively, as being unpatentable over Brown et al in view of Pinchasik et al. The Final Office Action has equated the curved regions of the Brown stent which connected adjacent struts to the recited connecting elements.

Claim 34 and 39 recites the presence of first, second and third serpentine expansion columns, each of which define a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent. Claims 37 and 42 recite the presence of expansion columns, each of which defines a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent. Claim 38 recites the presence of

*Application No. 09/952,562*  
*Page 16*

*Amendment*  
*Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-1/US03*

first and second expansion columns, each of which define a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent. Claim 44 includes the presence of expansion columns each of which defines a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent. Claim 46 and 47 recite the presence of first and second expansion columns each of which define a continuous closed path about the circumference of the stent. Claims 48-50 recite the presence of closed, continuous expansion columns. In addition, these claims recite the presence of connecting struts. The connecting struts of the claimed stent are separate from the expansion columns.

The Brown reference lacks the recited combination of expansion column defining continuous closed paths and curved connectors. Therefore, none of these claims or any claim is dependent therefrom are anticipated by Brown.

As for the combination of Brown and Pinchasik, there is no suggestion in the references taken alone or in combination to modify the Brown stent using the connectors of Pinchasik. Even if, for the sake of argument only, one were to combine the Brown and Pinchasik references, in light of the teachings of Pinchasik concerning twisting of the connectors, one would not provide connectors with ends which are circumferentially and longitudinally offset from one another. Rather, one would provide connectors where the ends are circumferentially aligned. The claimed stents, on the other hand, have connectors or the like whose ends are circumferentially and longitudinally offset from one another.

Therefore, the instant claims are patentable over the cited combination.

Respectfully submitted,

VIDAS, ABRETT & STEINKRAUS

Date July 1, 2003

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